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U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Park Service Press Release

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East Coast Greenway Inauguration Kicks-Off National Trails Day Events Nationwide, Celebrating “Healthy Trails, Healthy People”

NPS Director Announces 23 National Recreation Trail Designations in 12 States

Morris Warren, at 80+ years old, became a hiking enthusiast late in life, following a heart attack and instructions from his doctor to walk regularly. Warren soon discovered, however, that there were few places in suburban Maryland to walk. That was 12 years ago. He's now known as the driving force behind a grassroots effort that developed the WB&A Trail, a formerly abandoned rail corridor in Prince George's County.

Warren and many other trail enthusiasts saw the WB&A Trail, the National Mall and Mount Vernon Trail, become part of the East Coast Greenway, the only long-distance urban trail on the Eastern Seaboard, during a ceremony today celebrating the Greenway's inauguration and the kick-off of National Trails Day events nationwide.

“Today, a vision started by a small group of visionaries in 1991 to create the East Coast Greenway, a 2,600-mile urban trail system – an urban Appalachian Trail if you will – linking the cities and towns of America from Maine to Florida, is becoming a reality,” said National Park Service Director Fran Mainella. “This long-distance trail, when fully completed, will provide millions of Americans with a safe, continuous pathway for walking, hiking, and cycling. The inauguration of this trail is the perfect vehicle for kicking off National Trails Day events celebrating the theme “Healthy Trails, Healthy People” all over the country. We know that trails are more than remote footpaths; they are also retreats found within heritage corridors and urban areas, which are accessible and critical to the mental and physical well-being of our citizens.”

Mainella was joined at the event by Transportation Assistant Secretary Emil Frankel; Deputy Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu; Senator Paul Sarbanes (MD); Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL), Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC), and Michael Michaud (ME); East Coast Greenway Alliance Chair Dave Dionne; American Hiking Society President Mary Margaret Sloan; and champion racewalker Mark Fenton.

Mainella also announced the designation by Interior Secretary Gale Norton of 23 new National Recreation Trails in 12 states. The NPS and U.S. Forest Service jointly administer the program with help

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from a number of other federal and nonprofit partners, notably American Trails, which hosts the National Recreation Trail website (www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails). The National Recreation Trail Program recognizes existing trails that connect people to local resources and improves their quality of life. These trails provide opportunities for all Americans to enjoy the out-of-doors, participating in a wide array of trail-related activities on both public and private lands, and in both urban and rural areas.

The new trails designated include the Central Arizona Project (CAP) Trail, AZ; Big Dry Creek Trail, CO; Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail and Peghorn Nature Park and Trails, FL; Great River Trail and Rock Island State Trail, IL; Cardinal Greenway Trail, Cattail Trail, Monon Greenway and Northwest Greenway Trail, IN; Smith's Island Nature Trail, IA; Cross Island Trail, MD; Galloway Creek Greenway, MO; Village of Bluffton Pathway, OH; Arrowhead Trail, Ernst Recreation Trail, Ghost Town Trail, Houtzdale Line Trail, Luzerne County Rail-Trail, Samuel Justus Trail, and the Stavich Bike Trail (also in Ohio), PA; Cross Vermont Trail, VT; and the Pacific Northwest Trail, Olympic National Park Segment, WA. These trails join four National Recreation Trails earlier designated by the U.S. Forest Service, including Maah Daay Hey, ND; Tahoe Rim and Pioneer Trails, CA; and Massanutten Trail, VA.

In addition to supporting the East Coast Greenway inauguration and the National Recreation Trail designations, the National Park Service, through its Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, will assist with and celebrate nearly 100 National Trails Day events with communities in Arizona, Georgia, Maine, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Texas and Wisconsin. Events will include new trail dedications, workshops, educational exhibits, equestrian and mountain bike rides, water trail paddling, rollerblading, trail maintenance and hikes on America's favorite trails.

The NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance is the community resource of the NPS that works with local citizen groups to preserve open space, conserve rivers, and develop trail and greenway networks.

The East Coast Greenway Alliance is a national organization with state chapters (committees), currently governed by a 23-member board with representatives from all but one state from Maine to Florida. The Alliance sets the vision and defines clear criteria for the kind of trail to be created, and provides the needed coordination among the many players who will develop, own, and manage the trail. This organization also provides continuous monitoring of the trail once it is built, to ensure the trail-using public of a safe, high quality trail experience.

National Trails Day, now in its 11th year, is organized by the American Hiking Society, a recreation-based conservation organization dedicated to establishing, protecting, and maintaining America's foot trails. Additional support comes from federal agency supporters including the NPS, the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration.

For additional information about the East Coast Greenway, visit www.greenway.org. For information about the Rivers & Trails Program, visit www.nps.gov/rtca or call 202/354-6900. For information about National Trails Day, visit www.americanhiking.org or call 301/565-6704.

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Editor's Note: Additional information about the National Recreation Trails, and National Trails Days events co-sponsored by the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program can be obtained by calling the NPS Office of Communications and Public Affairs, 202-208-6843.